

RMC Legislative Committee
September 19, 2016
1pm-2pm
Conference Call
Meeting Minutes

Participants:

Mike Pennington

Don Mulrine

Erroll Mattox

Bill Christopher

Steve McHenry

Chris Ann Szep

Scott Warner

Nancy Nunn

Lara Wilson

Joanne Richart-Young

Roger Wilson

Odette Ramos

Matt Teffeu

Senator Addie Eckardt

Doris Mason

RMC Staff:

Charlotte Davis, Executive Director

Meredith Donaho, Program Administrator

The meeting was called to order at approximately 1:04 pm.

Chair Josh Hastings was unavailable to attend the Committee meeting. The meeting was led by Charlotte Davis.

July 7, 2016 Meeting Minutes

The meeting minutes from the July 7, 2016 Legislative Committee meeting were reviewed. No comments or suggestions were offered; the minutes were accepted unanimously.

Draft 2017 Legislative Priorities

Charlotte Davis presented and provided an overview of a draft of the 2017 Legislative Priorities, and requested suggestions and feedback. It was suggested that the statement under “Viable Agriculture, Aquaculture, Forestry & Rural Communities” include a statement on land use decisions in regards to renewable energy sprawl.

It was also suggested that the “Rural Health” section include a possible statement on youth and adolescent mental health initiatives, or provide a broader assessment of all health initiatives to include youth mental health.

It was mentioned that the rail line in Cambridge has been shutdown, which has opened a need for an adequate network of transportation, as well as solutions for how to maintain commerce without the rail line. It was discussed that in Western Maryland, rail lines are shutdown in parts due to land sliding issues. Rail lines could transport people instead of automobiles. Under “Transportation Funding for Local Government” it was suggested that the statement be revised to include a mention of the rail lines or to include a more broad statement that would encompass the need for transportation infrastructure under infrastructure priorities.

It was also suggested that vacant and abandoned housing initiatives be mentioned in the priorities. MACo and MML are working on how jurisdictions are handling foreclosed and abandoned properties,

including defining what constitutes as a foreclosed or abandoned property, and detaching liens from properties to make transfer of property easier. There will possibly be legislation this coming year focused on jurisdictions to create land banks. Odette Ramos will work with Charlotte to craft a statement to include in the draft.

It was suggested that priorities could also include language for small business tax credits be modified and made broader so more small businesses can take advantage of the tax credits. Currently, small businesses need to create 20-25 jobs to qualify for tax credits, most small businesses cannot afford this. This could be redefined to “increase jobs from 50-100%” for more small businesses to qualify.

Charlotte will make adjustments to the draft and will provide a revised 2017 Legislative Priorities handout for the next Legislative Committee meeting.

Renewable Energy Sprawl

The proliferation of solar rays has become a considerable concern in rural communities. MACo is expected to draft legislation that will require the consideration of local input for all emerging renewable energy projects. The Maryland Department of Agriculture is concerned about the potential impact on land use, and future implications for agriculture. The Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission will issue a report on the impacts of renewable energy in the coming months, this information will be shared with the Committee. Program Open Space is also looking at this issue, particularly open space and preserved agricultural land used for renewable energy projects.

Other Issues

There was a question regarding news about food hubs or local food distribution, specifically legislation addressing Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) language that poses a hindrance to food hubs. The Committee was not aware of any news on legislation in regards to food hubs. Odette Ramos volunteered to research food hubs to find out more, and announced that the Community Development Network of Maryland will be working on Community Development Fund legislation to secure more funds statewide this coming legislative session.

It was also suggested the Committee consider thinking about initiatives to create more public awareness about “Right to Farm” initiatives. It was mentioned that the Maryland Farm Bureau is looking to advocate for a “Right to Farm” constitutional amendment in the State constitution this coming legislative session.

No other issues or business was discussed.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 1:45 pm.

Next meeting: Monday, November 14, 2016, 1pm-2pm, Conference Call